

Howland Wood - Curatorial

Andersen, Fridtjov, Lt. Col.  
[Hotel Astor, NYC]

1918

Fridtjov Andersen  
Lieutenant Colonel de l'Artillerie Norvégienne  
A. Commandant du Rayon de Forteresses  
de Tønsberg

Hôtel Astor  
New York

Kristiania  
Norvège.



# Hotel Astor

TIMES SQUARE  
New York

WM.C.MUSCHENHEIM  
F.A.MUSCHENHEIM

Dear Doctor Wood!

127-130

I have not yet decided either I will buy the coins or not. The principal value seems to me: the large amount of coins from one single place. They bear unanimously the same name "Mahmud" the tataric conqueror of Bagdad as ruler. The mints are many different cities from Bagdad or Kut el Amara up to Mosul. Some pieces have been pierced and used for ornaments of ladies. Every one who is familiar with Oriental customs, has to expect the names of many predecessors in a large collection of mints of the time of Mahmud. The idea of a new standard of coinage at the time of Mahmud is excluded. Since some thousands of years before Christ, the didrachme (known in ancient Egypt) and its partitions have been known ~~as~~ basis of rare precious metals and mints. They are still in use as dinars. The Mahmud silver mints are based then too on the Dinar-system. There is only one reason possible, that the conqueror Mahmud declared all the coinage of the overdrawn dynasty unlawful and enforced a recoining of all the circulating coins with his name on the expense of the owner. The owner of non-recoined coins became a misdemeanour. I believe that this my theory is corroborated by the evident traces of older coinage seen in some of these coins. It resembles the palimpsest traces of some old manuscripts. I do not know if other evidences of a similar recoining by a conqueror, are known by numismatists. I am very busy at this time for U.S. government artilleristic defense preparations of the Atlantic shore. As director of the Norwegian National Industry, I have to consider business first together with duty for this country. As soon as I will get spare-time, I will enter into a deeper study of the recoining usage of Oriental conquerors, maybe with some relationship of Christ and the Phariseans about the Roman emperors coinage. I hope that I will have your help for this study. For this study, the price of the coins seems not high to me. Having finished this study, likely I will divide the coins of this collection between different public collections.



# Hotel Astor

TIMES SQUARE  
New York

WM. C. MUSCHENHEIM  
F. A. MUSCHENHEIM

As Norwegian, I will consider first, some specimens for the Kristiania collection, I like very much. But, as I can recognize, there are so many interesting mint places found on the Mahmud coins, that I am convinced that your large and rich collection then, too, may be interested into certain specimens of this collection. At this early time, I will promise nothing for certain. I have first to fulfil my duty and business toward the United States and I have to consider seconde my pleasure of taking up, scientific questions of the past. This letter is merely a information for you what I expect to do since you have been very kind to spend for me so much of your valuable time. Having returned to Norway, perhaps I may <sup>be</sup> useful for ~~use~~ you, procuring some Scandinavian decorations and medals of the desiderata of your Museum.

It has been very much pleasure for me to meet you. I thank you again for the valuable informations, you have given me and I hope that you will help me again when I will return a second time with the Mahmud coins to you.

With kind regards,

New York, May 16/1918. Faithfully yours

*for* Colonel Fridtjov Andersen  
*Oe.*

May 20th, 1918.

Lieut.-Col. Fridtjor Andersen,  
Hotel Astor,  
New York.

Dear Sir:-

Your interesting letter of the 16th at hand, and I am glad to hear from you again. I still think the asking value of those Mohammedan coins far too high. The Mahmud on these coins is Ghazan Mahmud, and it was his grandfather or great grandfather that conquered Bagdad and put an end to the rule of the Caliphs there. Also nearly all of the Mohammedan Rulers changed somewhat the weight and style of their coinage, and re-coined many of the coins of their predecessors so that there is nothing significant in what Ghazan Mahmud did. One also finds throughout all the series of Mohammedan coins instances of striking over previous coins. I am simply stating these facts so that you will not be deceived in thinking these peculiarities belonged to this Ruler alone.

In case you buy these pieces, we would very much like to go over this find, and list it so as to have it on record. If we do that we could classify and arrange these pieces for you, and separate them into lots as you may want. Naturally we would be very much interested in receiving any of these you might offer, and beg to thank you now for your appreciation and thought. We would be very glad, as I said, to render you any assistance that we can.

Trusting to see you soon, I remain,

Yours very truly,

Curator.



# Hotel Astor

TIMES SQUARE  
New York

New York, May 25/1918.

Dear Dr. Howland Wood!

WM. C. MUSCHENHEIM  
F. A. MUSCHENHEIM

Many thanks for your kind letter. Since within a week a federal commission has to test my instruments for shore defense, I shall postpone everything, no matter what interest I may have for it. At Kristiania we have Fonahn as a special professor for history of medicine. He is acquainted with the oldest Oriental languages. I knew him since he has been a pupil of my brother in law. You state that nearly all of the Mohammedan Rulers changed somewhat the weight of their coinage. In a contrary sense I understood Fonahn that during decades of centuries the weight of oriental coins persisted almost constant and that this circumstance was the basis of the use of coins for weight of drugs entering medical preparations. Very slight undulations could not cancell this costum; a repeated and continuous decrease would have done. I suppose that the recoinage, as a rule, has not been a profit for the ruler by decreasing of the coinage weight, but by a certain percentage charge from the recoined coinage as a taxation of movable property. All these ideas I have to postpone. The principal point I have learned from your letter, is the fact that you are very well acquainted reading Cufic inscriptions. The best Oriental Philologists are not acquainted with Cufics for the reason that a real litterature written in Cufic charakters does not exist. You may therefore be able to do me a great favor. The medicohistorical institute of the Kristiania University will appreciate it very much if you will read two lines of Kufic inscription of a pharmaceutical brass mortar of Nestorian Medicin of a similar period as the coins in question. The mortar is owned by the New York College of Pharmacy 115 W 68th Street. I will ask there for photograms of the mortar. The reliefs of the mortar are of the highest value for the history of Oriental art. Old Egyptian and old Babylonian known mythological pictures are superficially christianised and are arranged in an evident astrological idea ruling the medicine for thousands of years. If you can transcribe for me the Kufic signs into modern Arabic signs, my Norwegian countrymen will be able to use it for a scientific publication on history of medicine and will give you full credit for your valuable assistance. Professor Arny of the College of the Pharmacy of New York will then too appreciate your valuable reading. I expect to see you next Saturday for a dinner with others of my friends. Yours very truly

CABLE ADDRESS, - MUSCHENHEIM - NEW YORK

TELEPHONE ADDRESS, - 2100 BRYANT



# Hotel Astor

TIMES SQUARE  
New York

WM.C.MUSCHENHEIM  
F.A.MUSCHENHEIM

My dear Mr. Wood!

After our nice meeting yesterday, awaking this morning, I learned from the New York Herald the astonishing prices paid for some coins. The Mahmud coins are cheap in this comparison. I will like to learn that you have communicated about the Nestorian mortar with Cufic inscription with Professor Arny of the College of Pharmacy.

New York, June 2/1918.

very truly yours and hoping that you have been satisfied for the time of yesterday evening

A handwritten signature in cursive ink, enclosed within an oval border. The signature reads "W.C. Muschenheim".

\$300 for Silver Dollar of 1838.

At a sale of rare coins and autograph letters of the collection of the late William Poillon, of this city, in the McAlpin Hotel yesterday, \$300 was paid by M. Harrison for a United States silver dollar of 1838, showing Liberty seated, from an engraving by Gobrecht. Four other silver dollars of the years 1839, 1851 and 1852 were sold for \$75, \$100 and \$80 respectively. Henry Johnson paid \$87 for an autograph letter of George Washington, written in 1780. Receipts were \$1,500.



# Hotel Astor

TIMES SQUARE  
New York

WM. C. MUSCHENHEIM  
F. A. MUSCHENHEIM

Dear Mr. Wood!

Colonel Andersen was very busy the last week. He had some separate troubles too. The commission is delighted by the excellent work of the apparatus of Colonel Andersen; he has to visite soon again Washington D.C. He intended to come up to the Numismatic Society this week; but he had to postpone on the above reasons. He understood your willingness of deciphering the Nestorian Mortar with Kufic inscription. Your going there by taxicabe and other things will implicate some necessary expenses on your part, working about this mortar. Colonel Andersen will appreciate highly your kindness, reading the inscription. He will be indebted to you for this valuable work, but he will not like that any financial burdens for this work are left on your side. He begs you to accept the enclosed check of \$20.00 for your necessary expenses in connection with your visites of the Pharmaceutical College. Your reading of the inscription will be put before Professor Fonahn at Kristiania concerning history of medicine. Maybe he will give additional corrections about the real medical interpretation. It deems wise for the Colonel not to give the first reading to any body else until the time after revision of the medico-historical experts. Colonel Andersen hopes to hear soon words from you. For the mean wile, he sends you the best greetings

New York, June 10/1918.

very respectfully yours

for Colonel Fridtjov Andersen

Coll of Pharmacy.

115-W68

In Library.

~~115~~

June 12th, 1918.

Col. Fridtjov Andersen,  
Hotel Astor,  
New York.

Dear Colonel Andersen:-

Your letter of June 10th at hand enclosing cheque for twenty dollars. I am not anxious to accept this, and will hold it for awhile for as yet I have done no work on that inscription, as I have not received the photograph. Are you going to send it or is the College going to send it?

I leave here on Friday morning for two weeks but will be back here July 1st, and hope to see you then.

In the meantime, I remain,

Yours very truly,

Curator.



Dear Mr. Howland Wood!

WM.C.MUSCHENHEIM  
F.A.MUSCHENHEIM

I am sorry that you have misunderstood me. The mortar is in the college of Pharmacy in 68th Street West. I have supposed that you will be able to see the mortar in the library of the College in the original. I do not think that photograms will show the details. I have intended to cover your expenses for repeated taxicab expenses from the Numismatic Society to the College and the round trip.

I wish you to have a very nice time on your two weeks vacation trip and hope very much to see you soon after your return.

In the meantime I remain

New York, June 13/1918.

yours very truly

Fridtjov Andersen

October 4th, 1918.

Col. Fridtzor Andersen,  
Hotel Astor,  
New York.

Dear Sir:-

I am sending this letter to the Hotel Astor as I know of no other address. I suppose you have been wondering why you did not hear from me for such a long time. The fact of the matter is I have been extremely busy through war conditions and through a large exhibition we have been holding here. Also I have been away considerable.

Awhile ago I was down to the College of Pharmacy, and saw that Mortar. I have examined it very closely and really do not feel that it is worthy of any great amount of work put upon it. I do not think it is very old, not over two or three hundred years. It is undoubtedly copied from something older. The inscription is poorly written in places, and many words look to me wrongly written or bungled. So far I have not been able to make out any of the inscription. A number of prominent scholars have looked at this, and have been unable to read what it says on it, and I do not feel that I can make anything out of it either.

Did you ever do anything further about those coins you once showed me?

As I have been under no expense in this matter and have accomplished nothing I wish to return the money that you advanced me, and will do it when I hear from you.

Yours very truly,

Curator.